

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. If among the FCC's goals are promoting vigorous competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, then the FCC should certainly retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question and should also give careful consideration to reinstating many of the regulations that were abandoned during the Clinton administration. Such regulations ensure that the public interest will at least SOMETIMES be served by the companies which profit from their use of the public airwaves. These regulations justifiably limit the market power of already huge corporations in the broadcast industry.

Media deregulation since 1996 has resulted in less competition, not more. It has allowed giant corporate conglomerates to swallow their smaller competitors and to further consolidate the media industry. While there may be indeed be more television channels than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited. Such a narrowing of perspectives is harmful to our democracy.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. It is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest. In short, all Americans are stakeholders in this debate.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

For example, consider Clear Channel, which recently even sponsored a few pro-war rallies to help Mr. Bush counter the thousands of anti-war rallies sponsored by We The People. As Clear Channel grows in size and power, what will happen to voices that go against the Clear Channel grain? Can we really expect a company that spends its own money on pro-war rallies to offer equal time to individuals with an anti-war viewpoint? It is activity such as this that leaves me extremely skeptical of the Bush administration, which is actually pushing to deregulate the media even FURTHER: Michael Powell, chairman of the FCC (and, yes, Colin Powell's son) has expressed his intention to eliminate most of the few remaining regulations on the media industry by early June.

We Americans are in real danger of losing the ability to conduct

meaningful free speech and public debate. I look to you in the FCC to prevent such an appalling situation.

Sincerely,

Matthew Eager